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Johnson Suspected Castro Was Linked to Kennedy Assassination

WASHINGTON (AP) — A new report that late President Lyndon Johnson suspected Fidel Castro was linked to the assassination of President John Kennedy is "a significant piece of information," says the head of a Senate intelligence committee probe into the Nov. 22, 1963 assassination.

Senator Richard Schweiker (Rep. Pa.) said today: "It's pretty obvious to me that President Johnson wanted history to know something that he knew. . ."

ABC News Commentator Howard K. Smith revealed Thursday that Johnson once said to him in private, "I'll tell you something that will rock you. . . . Kennedy was trying to get to Castro, but Castro got to him first."

Smith said he took notes on the conversation, but kept them confidential. With renenewed speculation about the assassination, "I feel justified in recounting it publicly now."

The report of Schweiker's committee, released Wednesday, said the CIA and FBI covered up crucial information in their investigation of the assassination. The report said the CIA did not tell the Warren Commission about its plots against Castro's life, which the Cuban premier apparently knew about.

Johnson, who died in 1973, told CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite in a September 1969 interview, "I can't honestly say that I've ever been completely relieved of the fact that there might have been international connections" in the assassination.

CBS aired the remarks in April 1975 after newspaper columnist Marianne Means reported that Johnson told her a year before his death that he thougt Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone, but was under either the influence or the orders of Castro.

A source close to the Senate investigation theorized Johnson may have been reluctant to air his suspicions in the White House for fear of raising cries for U.S. retaliation against Cuba and running the risk of another Cuban missile-type confrontation with the Soviet Union.

The old Senate intelligence committee has disbanded, and a new intelligence panel has not yet decided whether to continue investigating the Warren Commission's theory that Oswold acted alone in the slaying.

Schweiker said his own staff is pursuing promising leads that could link the killing to a conspiracy involving either pro-Cubans or anti-Cubans.